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U.S. RELATIONS AND POLICIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1944-1958: RECORDS OF THE OFFICE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS



This collection identifies the key issues, individuals, and events in the history of U.S.-Southeast Asia relations between 1944 and 1958, and places them in the context of the complex and dynamic regional strategic, political, and economic processes that have fashioned the American role in Southeast Asia.

Date Range: 1944-1958

Content: 46,022 images

Source Library: National Archives (U.S.)

Detailed Description:

This collection puts American policy in Southeast Asia and the traumatic events of the first Indochina War and the desire for Communist containment into the larger perspective of the Cold War.

Historically, U.S. policy and diplomacy with Southeast Asia has been defined by U.S. interests in the region, whether it's maintaining free lanes of communication through the South China Sea, gaining access to the resources and markets of Southeast Asia, or containing the spread of Communism. Since World War II, the U.S. has constantly been involved in conflicts in the region: providing material and financial support for France during the First Indochina War and direct involvement in the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam.

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This new Archives Unbound collection comprises the following U.S. State Department Office files, also known as "Lot Files:"

Lot File 54-D-190: Records of the Philippine and Southeast Asian Division (1944-1952)

Under the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, the Philippine Affairs Division and the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs were responsible for the Conduct of American relations with the Republic of the Philippines, Thailand, all American controlled islands in the Pacific, and jointly with the appropriate divisions in the office of European Affairs, all British, Dutch, French, and Portuguese possessions, including those which subsequently became independent in Southeast Asia. The two divisions were consolidated in 1940 into the Philippine and Southeast Asian Division. The primary function of the division was to carry out the plans and overall policies formulated by the Office of Far Eastern Affairs for the region.

These records are primarily concerned with U.S. economic and commercial policy for the area, but also relate to political, military, and cultural aspects as well. There is also a considerable amount of material involving Nationalist and anti-colonial resistance movements in Indochina, Indonesia, and Malaya. Of special interest are the records on Ho Chi Minh and Communist activities in Indochina.

Lot File 55-D-480 and 5S-D-481: Records of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (1954)

These records cover all the countries in the region and all major events for the period. Included are materials on Burma, Communist China, Nationalist China, Hong Kong, Indochina, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Cambodia, Macao, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines. The records focus on U.S. efforts to reach a political settlement in Korea; the Prisoner-of-War problem following the Armistice; the operation of the Korean Armistice machinery; and relations between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea respecting political, economic, and military matters; and the Geneva Conference on Southeast Asia. There is also considerable material on Indochina and the efforts to establish a Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. Of particular interest is a documentary history of U.S. policy toward Indochina, reports and preparations for the Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina, and U.S. assistance programs for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos following the conference.

Lot File 58-D-266: Records of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (1954-1956)

This subject file focuses on conditions in Vietnam after the Geneva Conference of 1954. Included are intelligence reports on South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; reports and studies on such topics as French relations with Indochina and Senator Everett Dirksen's trip to Phnom Penh in 1955, reports by the Canadian Commission, 1954-1955; memoranda concerning Viet Minh violations of the Geneva Agreements; and telegrams, despatches, instructions, and notes to and from the U.S. military, British embassy, and the State Department.

Lot File 59-D-630: Records of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (Cambodia and Vietnam), 1953-1958

These records consist of memoranda, reports, studies, and background material prepared for congressional hearings, press releases, correspondence, and National Intelligence Estimates on the region. These records include information regarding U.S. containment policies; SEATO; the U.S. role in economic development; foreign aid; Southeast Asian reactions to U.S. programs; the Griffin Mission of 1950 which led to American economic assistance for

the region; U.S. military aid; and concern over Communist penetration. In addition, there is information pertaining to the political stability of Cambodia and Vietnam and proposals for strengthening the current governments.

Lot File 63-D-3: Records of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (Laos), 1952-1958

This subject file relates to the political affairs of Laos. Consisting of background documents, briefing papers, memoranda, reports and studies, the records pertain to U.S. government attitudes toward Laos; U.S.-Laotian relations; treaties with the U.S.; Laotian relations with other nations; the Pathet Lao and Communist activities; and U.S. military assistance and aid programs. Included are several reports from the International Supervisory Commission and the Canadian Commissioner.

Lot File 58-D-782: Records of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (Economic), 1950-1957

These records comprise a subject file for the region, and country and commodity files. They consist of correspondence, memoranda, Weekas, studies, reports, and background and briefing material pertaining to regional concerns such as security, East-West trade, Communist economic penetration, trade with Japan, the Mutual Security program, the Griffith Economic Mission, yearly appraisals, economic studies and surveys of regional cooperation, the Colombo Plan (regional economic development), land reform, U.S. export controls, assistance and economic development, military assistance, the Point IV Program, loans, and private investment. It also contains information on such commodities as copper, cotton, minerals, petroleum, rice, tin, sugar, tobacco, rubber, opium and timber. The country files include information pertaining to Malaya, Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, on such topics as U.S. grant programs, smuggling, trade negotiations, agriculture (land reform), cultural exchanges, development plans, relations with other nations, trade missions, labor, investment guarantees, and military assistance.

Lot File 58-D-726: Records of the Officer-in-Charge of Malayan Affairs, Subject Files, 1955-1956

This decimal subject file consists of briefing papers, reports, memoranda, intelligence estimates, telegrams, Operations Coordinating Board studies, and press releases. It covers such topics as British policies and views toward Malaya; the Asian-African Conference of 1955; Malayan relations with Australia, Communist China, the USSR, and the U.K.; anti-Communist campaigns; cultural exchanges; political parties; race relations; the 1956 London Talks regarding Singapore and Federation; subversive activities; military bases; and U.S. economic aid.

Lot File 58-D-257; Records of the Vietnam Desk Officer, Subject Files, 1954-1955

These are records maintained by the officer-in-charge of Vietnamese affairs in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs. These records comprise a subject file with briefing papers, background documents, correspondence, and memoranda relating to topics such as the Indochina war, the Geneva Conference, Battle of Dien Bien Phu, refugees, prisoners of war, the Viet Minh, Viet Minh-Chinese Communist relations with Bao Dai and the Diem government. Also

included are copies of the Psychological Intelligence Digest, Central Intelligence Agency briefs and reports, Weekly Intelligence Digests, and some British Intelligence reports. In addition, there are files on the political, military, and economic structure of the South Vietnamese government, the U.S. Information Agency program for the region, and U.S. attitudes and actions in South Vietnam.

Source Note: RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Lot Files 54-D-190, 55-D-480, 55-D-481, 55-D-266, 59-D-630, 63-D-3, 58-D-782, 58-D-726, and 58-D-257, National Archives, College Park, MD